

**U. S. Department of Homeland Security
U. S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Office Charleston
Marine Safety Information Bulletin**

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**U. S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Charleston
Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony**

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Charleston Change of Command occurred today. Commander Gary W. Merrick was formally relieved by Commander John E. Cameron. Commander Merrick is retiring from the Coast Guard after a long and distinguished career.

Commander Gary W. Merrick - Retiring Commanding Officer

Commander Merrick has been the Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Charleston since May 2001 and holds the positions of Captain of the Port, Officer in Charge Marine Inspection, Federal Maritime Security Coordinator, and Federal On Scene Coordinator. He departs the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Charleston to retire after 24 years of faithful service to our country.

Commander Merrick began his career in the armed forces in June of 1978. He served in the U.S. Army attending basic training at Fort Leonardwood, Missouri, and advanced training at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. After assignments in Munich, Germany, and at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, he entered the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in July of 1980. In June of 1984 Commander Merrick was assigned as a student engineer aboard the CGC TANEY in Portsmouth, Virginia. In 1986, Commander Merrick was assigned to Marine Inspection Office New Orleans. After completing his four-year tour, Commander Merrick was assigned to Marine Safety Office Baltimore where he completed a Port Safety Industry Training Program and served as the Marine Environmental Response Officer, Planning Department Chief and Senior Investigating Officer. In 1994, Commander Merrick was assigned as Executive Officer of the National Strike Force's Gulf Strike Team in Mobile, Alabama. From 1997 to 2001 he served at Training Center Yorktown as first the Assistant and then the Chief of the Marine Safety Training Branch.

Commander Merrick has a Bachelor of Science Degree from the Coast Guard Academy and a Master's Degree in Human Resource Development from George Washington University. His military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Coast Guard Commendation Medal, three Coast Guard Achievement Medals and various unit and team awards.

Commander John E. Cameron - Incoming Commanding Officer

Commander Cameron graduated from the U. S. Coast Guard Academy in May of 1984, with a Bachelors Degree in Marine Engineering. His first assignment was as Assistant Engineering Officer aboard the 378 foot Coast Guard Cutter RUSH, in Alameda, California.

In 1986, Commander Cameron was assigned to Marine Inspection Office New York and became a Senior Marine Inspector and Investigator serving U.S. flag vessels throughout Europe and the Middle East. During this assignment, he also served as the supervising Marine Inspector for the Kuwaiti National Oil Tanker Fleet bought under the U.S. flag during the Iran Iraq war of the late 1980's. In 1990, Commander Cameron attended the University of Michigan where he earned Masters Degrees in Aerospace Engineering and Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, before being assigned as the Chief, Domestic Tank Vessel Branch at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Center in Washington, DC. While assigned there, he was responsible for the oversight of all aspects of design of U.S. flag tank vessels and offshore drilling rigs, as well as serving as the Supervisor of the Coast Guard's Salvage and Emergency Response Team.

In 1996, Commander Cameron was assigned as the Executive Officer and Alternate Captain of the Port, Portland, Maine. In 2000, he was transferred to U.S. Coast Guard Activities New York where he became Chief, Marine Safety Operations Division, responsible for commercial vessel and marine facility safety and security, environmental protection and hazardous materials response, marine casualty investigation, and merchant mariner licensing for the Port of New York and New Jersey. On September 11, 2001, his Commanding Officer, Rear Admiral Richard E. Bennis, directed him to serve as the Coast Guard's liaison to New York City Mayor Guillian throughout the response to the World Trade Center attacks.

Change of Command Ceremony Information

The Change of Command Ceremony is a time-honored tradition. It signifies to the members of the command that although individuals may move on to other duties, the continuity of the command remains unbroken. Custom has established that this ceremony be formal and impressive, designed to strengthen the respect for authority which is vital to any military organization. Parading all hands at quarters and public reading of official orders stems from those days when movement of mail and persons was a very slow process. The procedure was designed to ensure that only duly authorized officers held command and that all aboard were aware of an order's authenticity.

The heart of the ceremony is the formal reading of official orders by the relieving officer and the officer to be relieved. Command passes upon utterance of the relieving officer, "I relieve you, sir," the officer relieved responds "I stand relieved!" This simple procedure is duplicated hundreds of times daily throughout the navies of the world as each watch officer passes responsibility to his relief in the conduct of the ship's routine.

The strength and success of today's Coast Guard stems in large measure from the observance of customs and traditions – each founded on need, each contributing its share to stability, mission effectiveness and smooth transfer of authority. This simple ceremony of passing authority and responsibility to yet another fine officer reflects the dedication of free men and women serving their nation proudly.

USCG Marine Safety Office Charleston Information

The Coast Guard Marine Safety Office (MSO) Charleston, South Carolina is a multimission unit with an area of operation that includes the coast of South Carolina, from its boundary with North

Carolina south to the Edisto River. This area includes the Port of Charleston, the Port of Georgetown, the fishing villages of McClellanville, Edisto Island, and the Myrtle Beach area. The 95 men and women at the MSO, (which includes active duty members, reservists, auxiliarists, civilians, and contractors), inspect commercial vessels for compliance with federal laws and regulations; respond to oil spills and hazardous material releases into the marine environment; enforce safety and security zones; investigate marine casualties such as collisions, groundings, and fires; issue licenses and Mariner Documents to merchant seaman; and monitor the transfer of bulk liquid products and explosives at marine facilities.

MSO Charleston exercises the authority of the Federal Regulations delegated to the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI); the Captain of the Port (COTP); the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC), and the Federal On Scene Coordinator (FOSC). These authorities all directly impact commercial vessel operations within the port area and on the navigable waters of the United States. The primary mission of the MSO is to ensure the safety, security and environmental protection of the waterways through a wide variety of enforcement and preventive methods.